

Beyond Crisis Management

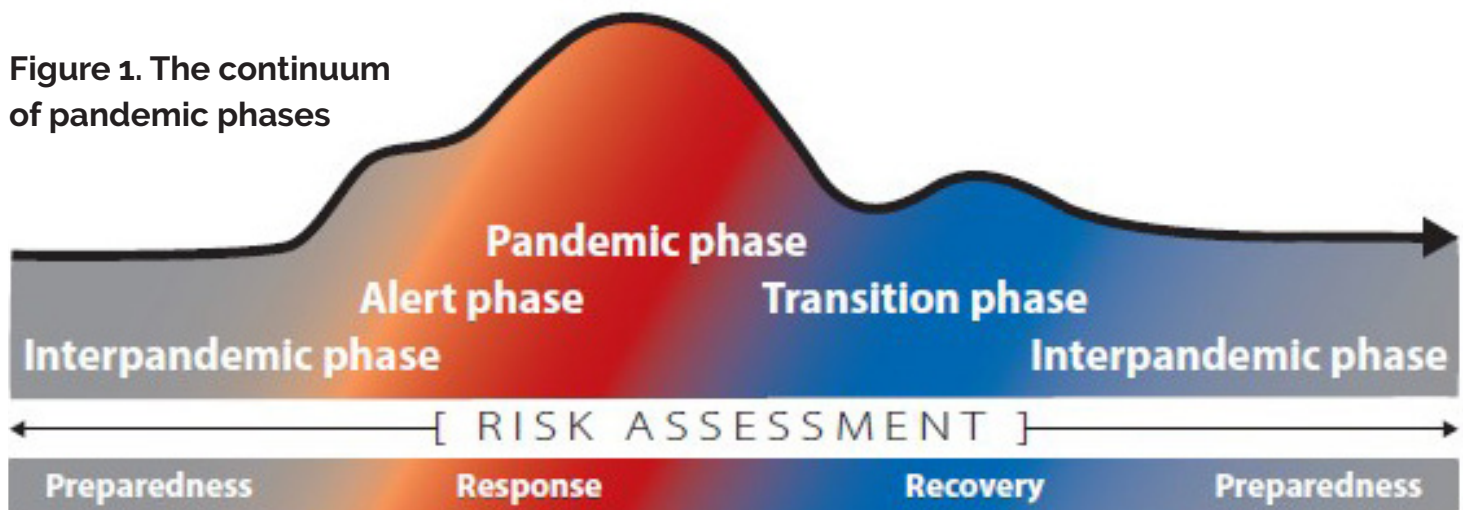
Plan for the Future (now)



Vince Shiers Ph.D.
Managing Director
RQA Group

We are well past the immediate incident management or "alert" phase of this crisis. We are all now in the "pandemic phase" as defined by WHO (see diagram). Depending upon where you are in the world, you will be at different stages of this second phase, but no country has eradicated the virus. We could be here for some time and even after the "pandemic phase", there is a potentially long "transition phase". It is therefore time to stop *reacting* to the pandemic crisis and start *managing* operations in a new way to fit the ongoing circumstances.

Figure 1. The continuum of pandemic phases



WHO (2017) - see end of article for explanation of terms and reference.

There is much talk of "soon it will be over", "we are getting through this", "it is time to get back to normal". But actually, we are not getting back to normal any time soon. There may even be some reasons for **not wanting to fully get back to normal**.

Professor Dale Fisher, Chair of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network steering committee for the WHO says "**This isn't over until it's over and most of us are thinking second half of next year would be a good outcome**".

So, we all have to adapt to working like this for quite some time. The economy must go on. Your business must go on. Put the short-term emergency measures behind you and start developing longer term practices.

Here are a few tips to add to your discussions:

- 1 Identify a pandemic "guru"** within the business. This person should keep up to date on Covid-19 measures in all the countries where you operate. They should provide your board or management team with weekly briefings on increases or decreases in society and business control measures. These will vary in different countries.
- 2 Beware the second wave.** Relaxing restrictions too soon, will result in increases in infections of the population. This is already being seen in some countries. As a business, you have to comply with regulatory restrictions, but you don't have to relax them at the same speed as the regulators who face political pressure. Make your own decisions on that.

3 You will already have identified key business operations and personnel. These are key to running the business in a crisis. Now extend that to identify who you need to **run the business in the longer term**. This will be a larger group of people that will also enhance and increase your business capability.

4 Learn what your business can **operate (and even thrive) without**. E.g. transatlantic flights for meetings; sending auditors across the world when there are local specialists available; buying through extended supply chains when there are local options. Start developing this now.

5 Whilst focusing on the pandemic response, **don't forget the basics**. Staff training must continue, so re-start the training programme using remote delivery techniques. Continue the internal audit programme to ensure the business is operating safely and effectively. Restart anything that you need to improve your operations in this long second phase.

6 **Communicate** with your staff regularly. Encourage them to follow regulatory advice. Focus on personnel safety and ensure they can communicate with you if they have concerns.

7 If you make products, all the hard work you do to ensure product safety must continue. If there were any deviations from standard practices in the first few days of the crisis, make sure you are **back to your normal manufacturing controls** and processes.

8 If you are an office-based company, you will probably be home-working. **Try not to spend your full day on the phone or in video meetings**. You used to do this in the office and it is a huge distraction from effective work. Only attend meetings that you are chairing or are a lead participator or invited to for key knowledge transfer. Don't attend meetings for the sake of it. Try to remember this once you are back in the office.

9 Many certification audits have stopped. This means that there is a **new supply chain risk** – suppliers not being independently checked and improvements implemented. Consider options for remote audits to maintain the robustness of your supply chain. This may also be something to consider for the future.



10 After the pandemic, **don't go back to normal business**, use what you learned during this period and have a plan ready for operating in a leaner way. Get that plan ready now.





Despite spending 20 years in the crisis management business, the scale of this pandemic is something I and the rest of us have never seen before. Looking forward, in today's terms, **a company that fully adapts to the phases of the crisis and is best prepared for its eventual end will thrive in the new world.**

Vince Shiers Ph.D.
Managing Director
RQA Group

Look back to see forward...

One thing I did in the early days of the disease spread was to read up about the Spanish Flu (1918-1920). Much of this is a parallel to what is happening now. Well worth a read and lots to learn: *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World*, by Laura Spinney.

For more on RQA and our services:

 www.rqa-group.com
 contact@rqa-group.com
 +44 (0)118 935 7242
 [LinkedIn](#)

If you need help with crisis planning, crisis management training delivered remotely or a remote simulation exercise click here

Definition of Terms - WHO:

Interpandemic phase: The period between influenza pandemics.

Alert phase: This is the phase when influenza caused by a new subtype has been identified in humans. Increased vigilance and careful risk assessment, at local, national and global levels, are characteristic of this phase.

Pandemic phase: This is the period of global spread of human influenza caused by a new subtype based on global surveillance.

Transition phase: As the assessed global risk reduces, de-escalation of global actions may occur, and reduction in response activities or movement towards recovery actions by countries may be appropriate, according to their own risk assessments

Reference: [Pandemic Influenza Risk Management, World Health Organisation, May 2017](#)

www.rqa-group.com
contact@rqa-group.com